

REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended as recommended by the Examiner on page 6 of the Office Action to recite that the thickness of each arm of the expander device tapers continuously towards the center of the circumference of the expander device. Support is provided by Figures 9-12 of the application. Claim 1 has also been amended by the deletion of a feature that is unnecessary in view of the Examiner's comments on page 5 of the Office Action. No new matter has been introduced by the claim amendments.

Claims 1, 2, 5-9, 15 and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over US 4,548,201 to Yoon ("Yoon") in view of US 5,643,290 to Clark et al. ("Clark").

On page 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner alleges that it would have been obvious at the time of the claimed invention to provide ribs on the underside of the arms of the ring dilator disclosed by Yoon at Figure 21 A and slots on cylinder B of the applicator **200** in order to better align the dilator and adaptor and to provide an even pushing force on band **10**.

Neither Yoon nor Clark, whether taken alone or in combination, suggests the claimed invention wherein the inner thickness of each arm of the expander device tapers continuously towards the center of the circumference. Advantageously, the design of the claimed invention facilitates a more precise alignment of the arms of the expander device with the fingers of the adapter to ensure a more controlled manoeuvring of the elastic cord along the fingers of the adapter (See Figures 13-15 and page 11, lines 2-11).

For all of the foregoing reasons and the reasons of record, Applicants respectfully submit that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established. Withdrawal of the §103 rejection is requested.

CONCLUSION

Applicants have made a good faith attempt to respond to the Office Action. It is respectfully submitted that claims 1, 2, 5-9, 15 and 16 are in condition for allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

Any fees due in connection with this response should be charged to Deposit Account No. 23-1703.

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Respectfully submitted,

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